

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Food stamp-eligible immigrants increasingly face hunger yet do not participate in the Food Stamp Program

New York, NY – January 22, 2007. One fourth of those eligible for food stamps but not participating in the Food Stamp Program are immigrants, according to FoodChange’s *Immigrant Access to the Food Stamp Program* report released today. Due to this lack of food stamp participation, New York City forgoes \$646 million every year in federal funds. While hunger and food insecurity are widespread among New York City’s immigrant populations, the highest concentrations of eligible but not participating immigrants reside in Queens and Brooklyn.

The causes of hunger are largely the same for all low-income New Yorkers: minimum-wage employment and rising housing costs. Though immigrant males in NYC have a higher labor force participation rate than their native-born counterparts, this employment does not translate into economic stability or hunger relief. In addition, soaring housing costs especially affect the senior citizens, disabled, and single parent immigrant households who often have to make the difficult choice between rent and food.

Compared to U.S-born people, immigrants face specific barriers to food stamp participation, such as fear and misinformation. Basic eligibility rules are the same for everyone: whereas undocumented immigrants cannot receive food stamps, children under the age of 18 with legal permanent resident status and citizen children of immigrants may be eligible. Under Executive Order 41, city agencies, including food stamp offices, are prohibited from reporting the immigration status of people soliciting their services or from asking questions pertaining to their immigration status.

“While excited about compiling this report, we are even more ecstatic about acting on it. FoodChange worked diligently to identify the issues; now we can engage in decisive action to alleviate the problem,” said Nicole Christensen, FoodChange’s Director of Food Access. “We are working with immigrant organizations and community leaders who can truly inform and affect their communities. Our hope is that New York City will lead the nation as these efforts dovetail with the city’s initiatives to increase food stamp participation, especially within the immigrant population, and to maximize the city’s capture of federal dollars.”

About FoodChange

FoodChange’s mission is to improve lives through nutrition, education, and financial empowerment. Founded in 1980, FoodChange provides emergency meals to New York City’s hungry children and adults. Through education, direct service and technical assistance we increase low-income people’s nutrition knowledge and put them on the path to healthy eating habits. And, to enhance people’s ability to afford healthy foods, we help them capture and maximize all the food stamp, tax, and other income-supporting benefits to which they are legally entitled.

For more information, visit www.foodchange.org